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EXCISE

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EXTENS

TEXT OF TELEGRAM BOKABUL 001057

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02  
SS-15 ICA-11 /087 W  
-----029093 181141Z /15

P R 190556Z MAR 80  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7258  
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 1057

E.O. 12065: GDS 3/16/86 (GRIFFIN, GEORGE G. B.) OR-M  
TAGS: PEPR, AF, EG, US, UR  
SUBJECT: REPORTED CAPTURE OF EGYPTIAN "SPY" IN AFGHANISTAN

1. (U) OFFICIAL AFGHAN TELEVISION ON MARCH 14 CARRIED A  
PRESS CONFERENCE IN KABUL FEATURING A MAN WHO SAID HE WAS  
ZIAMUDDIN MAHMOUD. HE DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS A 27-YEAR-OLD  
EGYPTIAN WHO HAD STUDIED AT AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY AND HAD  
RECENTLY BEEN EMPLOYED IN KUWAIT BY A PUBLISHER AND POLI-  
TICAL ACTIVIST (ABDULLAH EL HAKIM?) WHO RECRUITED HIM FOR A  
COVERT ASSIGNMENT IN AFGHANISTAN. HE CLAIMED THAT HIS  
KUWAITI EMPLOYER HAD DESCRIBED TO HIM THE START OF A JEHAD  
(HOLY WAR) BY MUSLIMS IN AFGHANISTAN AND CONVINCED HIM TO  
JOIN IN THE FIGHT. THE KUWAITI HAD INTRODUCED HIM TO A  
GERMAN CITIZEN (HERR HALIK?) WHO HAD ARRANGED FOR MAHMOUD TO  
GO TO WEST GERMANY FOR TRAINING. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS,  
MAHMOUD FIRST INSISTED THAT HE HAD BEEN TAKEN VIA BONN TO  
A PLACE HE COULD NOT DESCRIBE. (WHEN ONE OF THE POLISH

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JOURNALISTS PRESENT ASSERTED THAT BONN HAS NO AIRPORT,  
MAHMOUD BECAME FLUSTERED AND THE SUBJECT WAS DROPPED.)

2. (U) MAHMOUD TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE HAD UNDERGONE ABOUT  
12 DAYS' TRAINING IN GERMANY, LEARNING ABOUT VARIOUS TYPES  
OF SOVIET MILITARY EQUIPMENT. (HE DEMONSTRATED HIS KNOW-  
LEDGE BY RATTLING OFF TERMS SUCH AS MIG-21, ANTONIV-22,  
AND TUPELOV-74.) ASKED BY WHOM HE WAS TRAINED, MAHMOUD  
REPLIED, "YOU CAN SAY CIA." HE SAID THAT HE HAD ARRIVED

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY RUB DATE 8/21/89

( ) INTERNAL ( ) DECLASSIFY  
(X) INTERNAL (X) DECLASSIFY in PART  
( ) UNCLASSIFIED ( ) Non-exemptive info.  
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IN AFGHANISTAN ABOUT A MONTH AGO VIA PAKISTAN AND THAT HE HAD BEEN PICKED UP ALMOST IMMEDIATELY WHEN AFGHAN SOLDIERS ATTACKED THE VILLAGE OF "CHIGI" IN THE KONAR VALLEY WHERE HE WAS HIDING. HE ALLEGED THAT HE HAD BEEN INFILTRATED INTO AFGHANISTAN FROM CHITRAL ALONG WITH TWO BRITISH AND TWO CHINESE AGENTS. HE TOLD A QUESTIONER THAT THE OTHER FOUR HAD LEFT HIM IN "CHIGI" BECAUSE HE WAS TOO TIRED AND WEAK TO ACCOMPANY THEM FURTHER. HE INFORMED ANOTHER REPORTER THAT IN PAKISTAN HE HAD BEEN TAKEN IN TOW BY MEMBERS OF THE HIZBI ISLAMI OF GULBUDDIN HEKMATYAR.

3. (U) ASKED BY A SOVIET JOURNALIST IF HE KNEW THE PENALTY FOR SPYING IN AFGHANISTAN, MAHMOUD ALLOWED THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT HE COULD BE HANGED. HE THEN LAUNCHED INTO AN EXPLANATION OF HOW, AFTER HE HAD BEEN CAPTURED, HE HAD SEEN HOW "NORMAL AND NICE" THE SITUATION WAS IN AFGHANISTAN, AND DECIDED THAT HE HAD BEEN "DECEIVED" BY THIS SPONSORS. WHEN A SOVIET CORRESPONDENT ASKED WHAT HE WOULD DO IF THE DRA DECIDED TO BE "MERCIFUL" WITH HIM, MAHMOUD SMILED BROADLY AND SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW. HE QUICKLY ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE COULD NOT RETURN TO EGYPT WHERE SADAT WAS "MISLEADING" THE PEOPLE ABOUT THE "TRUE FACTS" IN AFGHANISTAN.

4. (C) WE HAVE NO IDEA WHO MAHMOUD MIGHT BE BUT MOST OBSER-  
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VERS HERE DOUBT THAT HE IS EGYPTIAN; THEORIES WE HAVE HEARD INCLUDE SPECULATION THAT HE IS A PALESTINIAN OR A MAD AFGHAN

ARGUES THAT MAHMOUD COULD NOT BE AN EGYPTIAN FOR FOUR REASONS: (A) AT THE OPENING OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE MAHMOUD INTRODUCED HIMSELF IN CLASSICAL (NOT COLLOQUIAL) ARABIC; (B) THE DRA FAILED TO PRODUCE AN EGYPTIAN PASSPORT FOR MAHMOUD AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE (A STANDARD PROCEDURE IN PAST SUCH CASES); (C) MAHMOUD INTERRUPTED A TRANSLATION OF HIS REMARKS TO CORRECT THE INTERPRETER, DEMONSTRATING THAT HE SPOKE DARI (THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF AFGHANISTAN); AND (D) MAHMOUD SEEMED TOO RELAXED THROUGHOUT THE PRESS CONFERENCE.

5. (C) COMMENT: WE AGREE THAT DURING THE INTERVIEW MAHMOUD WAS UNUSUALLY RELAXED FOR A MAN WHO KNEW HE COULD BE HANGED. HE BECAME FLUSTERED ONLY ONCE (WHEN CHALLENGED ABOUT HIS ASSERTION THAT HE HAD FLOWN IN AND OUT OF BONN) AND AT THAT TIME APPEARED TO LOOK QUICKLY TO AN OFF-SCREEN OFFICIAL FOR ADVICE. MOREOVER, WHEN HE REPLIED TO SOVIET OR AFGHAN REPORTERS, MAHMOUD REPEATEDLY CALLED THEM "MY FRIEND," LEADING MANY TO CONCLUDE THAT HE WAS REALLY A SOVIET OR DRA AGENT POSING AS SOMETHING ELSE. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT HE CORRECTED THE INTERPRETER IN MID-SENTENCE, BUT HE DID SO IN ENGLISH, THE LANGUAGE HE USED FOR MOST OF THE PRESS CONFERENCE (WHICH LEADS US TO THINK THAT THE AUTHORITIES WANTED TO INSURE THAT WE GOT THE MESSAGE). WE ARE NOT QUALIFIED

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TO COMMENT ON HIS USE OF ARABIC.

6. (C) WE ALSO NOTE THAT IN THE MONTH SINCE HIS ALLEGED CAPTURE, MAHMOUD COULD HAVE BEEN TOTURED TO SAY ALMOST ANYTHING. WE PRESUME THAT WE WILL BE TREATED TO MORE SUCH ATTEMPTS TO "PROVE" FOREIGN MEDDLING IN AFGHANISTAN TO BOLSTER THE SOVIET RATIONALE FOR ITS MILITARY INTERVENTION. THIS CASE, MOREOVER, AGAIN UNDERSCORES THE PRECARIOUS POSITION OF FOREIGNERS IN AFGHANISTAN WHO DO NOT HAVE DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY AND COULD HAVE BEEN DESIGNED AS A WARNING TO WESTERN

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JOURNALISTS SNEAKING IN FROM PAKISTAN. IF IT IS ANY COMFORT, IT CAN BE RECORDED THAT NO ONE TO WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN ABOUT THE MAHMOUD CASE BELIEVES HIS STORY. MILLS

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